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ABSTRACT

Research using behavioral measures has indicated that men react less positively to the touch of a same sex individual than women, that both men and women react more positively to the touch of an opposite sex individual than to the touch of a same sex individual, and that men and women do not differ in their reactions to opposite sex touch. This study was undertaken to determine whether these findings would hold true using attitudinal measures (observing someone being touched rather than actually being touched). Subjects were 15 male and 15 female employees of a data processing service. Subjects examined a photograph of a man and woman standing at a normal conversation distance and were told to consider this photograph as a 4 on a 1 to 7 scale. Subjects were shown eight additional photographs and asked to rate them as being more negative or positive than the first photograph. These photographs varied by gender of individuals in the photograph and by degree of touching (shaking hands, hugging). Findings were consistent with previous behavioral studies in that high intimacy appeared to be more pleasant in the eyes of others when the participants were of the opposite sex than when they were of the same sex. Reactions to same sex intimacy was affected by the sex of the observer and high same sex intimacy led to less positive ratings than did low same sex intimacy. The significant findings were due to hugging males being viewed more negatively by males than any other type of interaction. The results support the contention that people hold a less conservative attitude when observing others interact in a touching situation than when they are the object of the touch. (NB)

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Reactions to Others' Intimacy

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Running head: REACTIONS TO OTHERS' INTIMACY

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Reactions to Others' Intimacy

Research using behavioral measures indicates that men react less positively to the touch of a same sex individual than women, that both men and women react more positively to the touch of an opposite sex individual than to the touch of a same sex individual, and that men and women do not differ in their reactions to opposite sex touch (Hewitt & Feltham, 1982; Stier & Hall, 1984; Ross, Layton, Erickson, & Schopler, 1973).

The question remains whether these findings would hold true using attitudinal measures (i.e., observing someone being touched rather than actually being touched). In a preliminary investigation of this question, Hewitt and Lewis (1985) reported that high intimacy contact was viewed as more pleasant if the participants were opposite sexed. Somewhat surprisingly, Hewitt and Lewis reported that high same sex intimacy was viewed as more positive than low same sex intimacy.

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether the same pattern of results would emerge when using attitudinal measures. However, given the recent concern with AIDS it was hypothesized that same sex low intimacy would be viewed as more positive than same sex high intimacy.

Method

Subjects

Fifteen male and fifteen female employees of a small midwestern data processing service volunteered to serve as participants for this study.

Procedure

The subjects were shown a photograph of a man and a woman standing at a normal conversation distance and told to consider this photograph a 4 on a 1 to 7 scale. Next the subjects were shown eight additional photographs and were told to compare them to the first photograph, rating them based on their reaction to the first photograph. The rating scale ranged from 1 (much more negative) to 7 (much more positive). The order of presentation of the eight additional photographs was random.

Each photograph showed one individual in the background facing to his right at a 45 degree angle and one individual in the foreground facing to his right at a 45 degree angle. The two people faced one another directly. The first photograph (the photograph with which the remaining eight photographs were to be compared) showed male #1 and female #2 in a nontouching interaction. In the eight additional photographs, the two participants were shown touching as follows: female #1 facing the viewer and male #1 with his back to the viewer were shown hugging; male #2 facing the viewer and male #1 with his back to the viewer were shown hugging; female #2 facing the viewer and male #2 with his back to the viewer were shown hugging; female #1 facing the viewer and female #2 with her back to the viewer were shown hugging; male #1 facing the viewer and female #1 with her back to the viewer were shown shaking hands; male #1 facing the viewer and male #2 with his back to the viewer shown shaking hands; female #2 facing the viewer and female #1 with her back to the viewer shaking hands; and male #2 facing the viewer and fe-

male #2 with her back to the viewer shaking hands. In the hugging photographs, the two individuals had their arms around one another and their faces were touching. The handshake condition varied with the gender composition of the dyad; when the participants were both male, the two were shown shaking hands and one of the males was holding the elbow of the other. In the the mixed gender and female-female dyads, the person in the foreground had both hands face up a chest level cupping the hands of the partner.

Results

The results of a one way within subjects analysis of variance indicated that female raters rated seven of the eight photographs significantly higher than the value of 4.00 which they assigned to the comparison photograph. (See Table 1 for a summary of the average ratings for each photograph as a function of the gender of the rater.) The one photograph which was not rated significantly different from the comparison photograph pictured two males hugging ($\overline{X}$=3.87). The data provided by male raters indicated that only four of the eight photographs were viewed as significantly more positive than the comparison photograph. The photographs depicting males shaking (4.00), females shaking (4.40), and females hugging (4.27) were not rated as significantly different from 4.00. One photograph (two males hugging) was rated as significantly more negative (3.00) than the comparison photograph.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Female and Male Ratings of Eight Photographs

	FEMALE RATERS							
	HUGGING CONDITION				HANDSHAKING CONDITION			
	M1F1	M1M2	M2F2	F1F2	M1F1	M1M2	M2F2	F1F2
M	5.60	3.87	5.40	5.73	5.00	4.87	4.73	4.67
SD	1.68	2.03	1.08	1.03	1.20	1.60	0.96	0.98
	MALE RATERS							
	HUGGING CONDITION				HANDSHAKING CONDITION			
	M1F1	M1M2	M2F2	F1F2	M1F1	M1M2	M2F2	F1F2
M	5.93	3.00	5.80	4.27	4.80	4.00	4.73	4.40
SD	1.03	1.69	1.26	1.79	1.01	1.77	1.03	1.30

The results of a 2 (gender of rater) X 4 (type of photograph) X 2 (type of touch) mixed factorial analysis of variance design revealed several significant findings. As Table 2 indicates, the main effect for the type of photograph was significant, $F(3,84) = 14.28$, $p < .001$. Analyzing the cell means with Tukey's critical difference test after collapsing across rater gender and type of touch reveals that the photographs of the males interacting (either hugging or shaking) were rated significantly more negatively than were the photographs of the female dyads or the male-female dyads which were not significantly different from each other (see Figure 1). The gender of rater by type of photograph interaction was also significant, $F(3, 84) = 3.07$, $p < .05$. Tukey's critical difference test revealed that the ratings

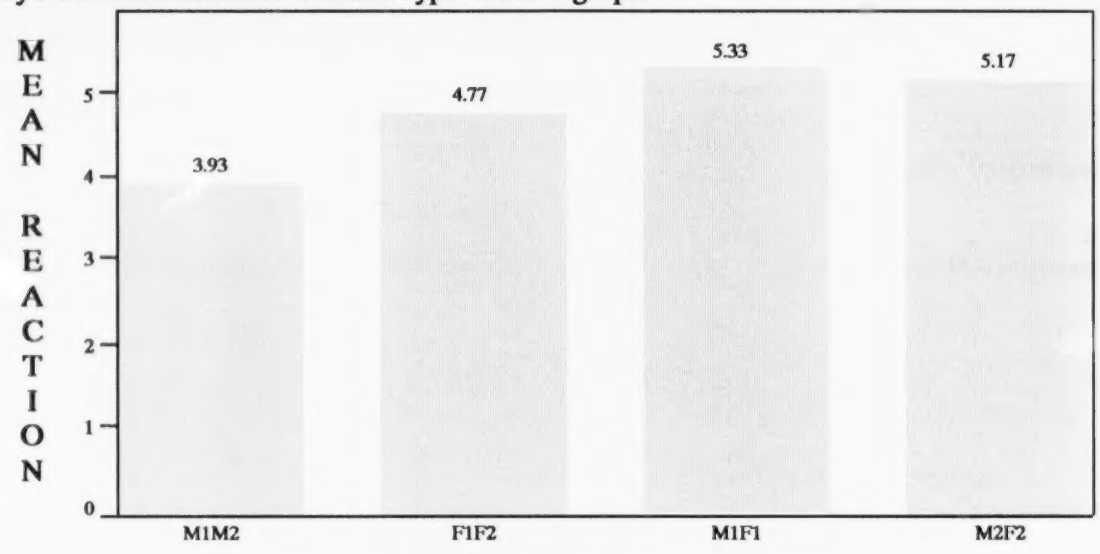
provided by male raters for the photographs depicting males interacting (either hugging or shaking hands) were viewed as significantly more negatively than were any other depicted interactions (see Figure 2). In addition, the type of touch by type of photograph interaction was significant, $F(3, 84) = 15.53$, $p < .001$. Tukey's test indicated that the cell means for hugging males accounted for this interaction. Hugging males were viewed by both males and females significantly more negatively than were any other interacting dyads (see Figure 3). Finally, the gender of rater by type of photograph by type of touch three way interaction was significant, $F(3, 84) = 3.07$, $p < .05$. Results of Tukey's test indicated that while ratings by males of hugging males are not seen as significantly more negatively than the ratings

Table 2
GENDER (A) X TYPE OF PHOTOGRAPH (B) X TYPE OF TOUCH (C) ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Source	df	MS	F	p
A	1	8.07	<1	
S/A	28	6.35		
B	3	23.42	14.28	.001
A X B	3	5.04	3.07	.05
B X S/A	84	1.64		
C	1	5.40	<1	
A X C	1	0.06	<1	
C X S/A	28	2.82		
B X C	3	11.80	15.53	.001
A X B X C	3	2.33	3.07	.05
B X C X S/A	84	0.76		

Figure 1

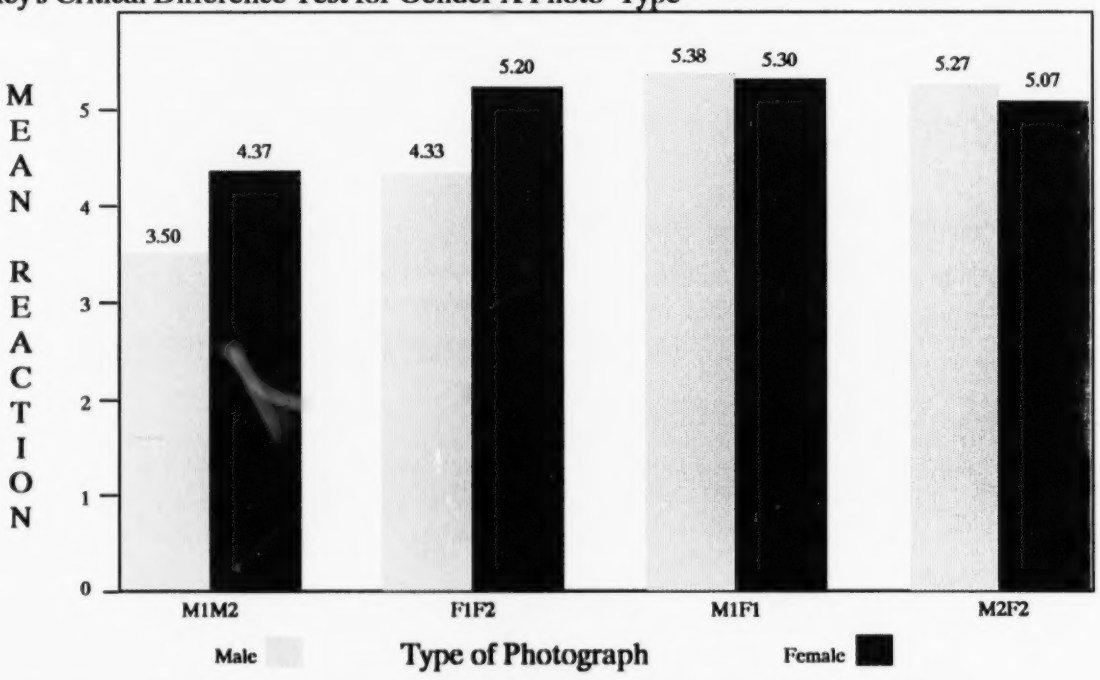
Tukey's Critical Difference Test for Type of Photograph



Tukey Critical Value = .61

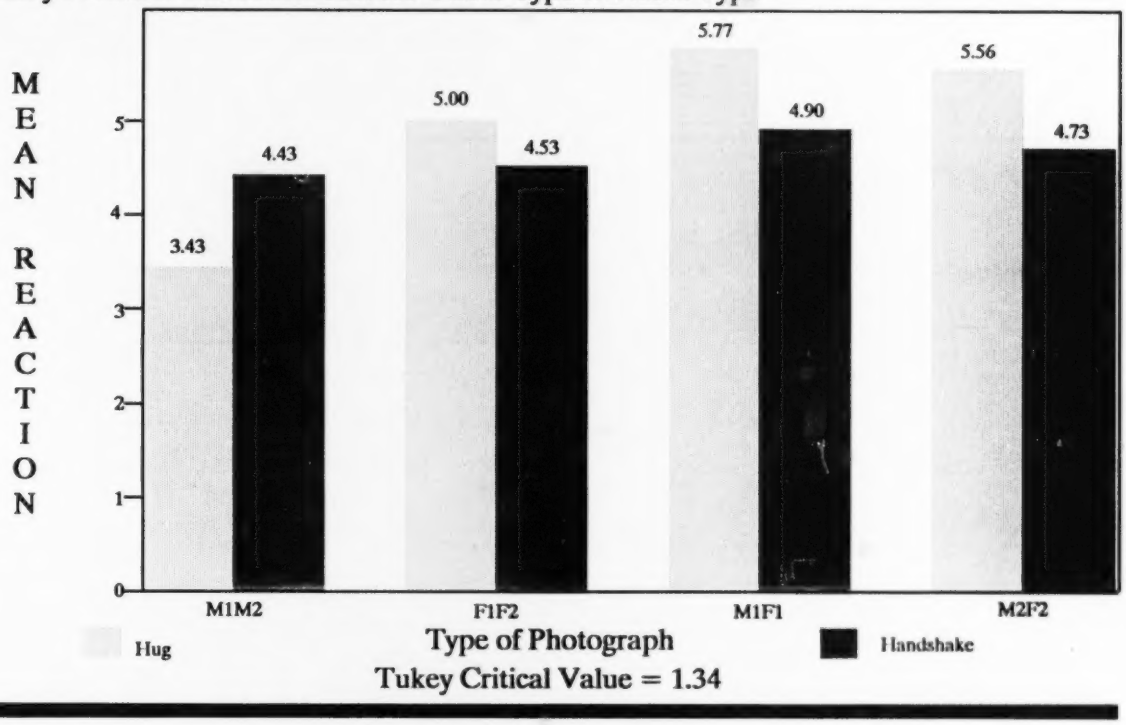
Figure 2

Tukey's Critical Difference Test for Gender X Photo Type



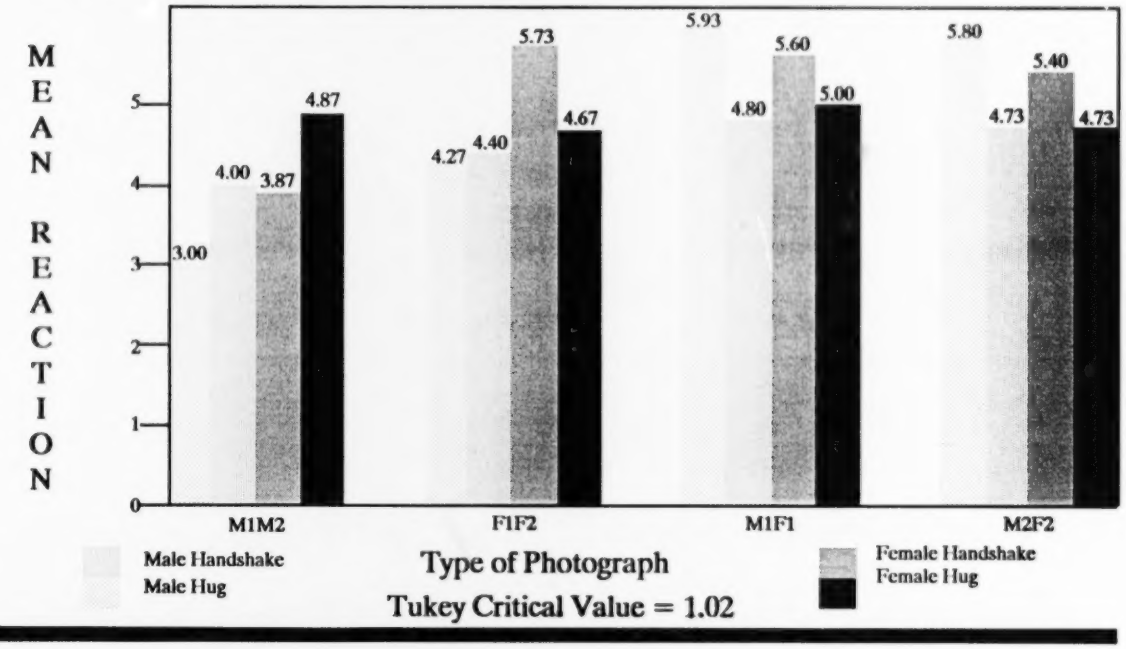
Tukey Critical Value = 1.88

Figure 3
Tukey's Critical Difference Test for Photo Type X Touch Type



Tukey Critical Value = 1.34

Figure 4
Tukey's Critical Difference Test for Gender X Photo Type X Touch Type



Tukey Critical Value = 1.02

that they provided for hand shaking males or the ratings provided by females of hugging males, male raters do perceive hugging males as significantly more negatively than any other interacting dyads (see Figure 4).

Discussion

The results obtained from this study remain consistent with previous behavioral studies in that high intimacy is more pleasant in the eyes of others when the participants are of the opposite sex than when they are of the same sex. Contrary to the results of Hewitt and Lewis (1985) but consistent with their expectations, reactions to same-sex intimacy was affected by the sex of the observer and high same-sex intimacy (hugging) lead to less positive ratings than low same-sex intimacy (shaking hands). Several additional considerations are warranted by the data. First, it is apparent that the significant findings of this study are due to the fact that hugging males are viewed more negatively by males than any other type of interaction. Virtually every one of the statistically significant findings in this study was due to the low ratings given to the hugging males by male raters. Second, while one may be tempted to conclude that these results parallel the results found in the behavioral studies involving same-sex/mixed-sex interactions, it should be pointed out that only one cell mean score (hugging males rated by males) was perceived more negatively than the comparison photograph depicting a noninteracting male/female dyad. Thus, the results of this study do support the contention that one holds a less conservative attitude when observing others interact in a touching situation than when they are the object of the touch.

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